AMERICAN SMOKE-TREE

Cotinus obovatus Raf.

OTHER COMMON NAMES: Chittamwood, Smoketree, Yellow-wood.

FORM: 25-35 feet high, with a straight trunk 12-14 inches in diameter, usually divides up 12-14 feet from the ground into several erect stems, separating into wide-spreading often pendulous branches.

BARK: 1/8 inch thick, light gray, furrowed and broken on the surface into thin oblong scales.

TWIGS: Purple when they first appear, soon become green, bright red-brown, dark orange-colored the second year.

LEAVES: Alternate, simple, oval or obovate, rounded or sometimes slightly emarginate at the apex, gradually contracted at the base, entire with slightly wavy margins, dark green on the upper surface when mature, pale below.

FLOWERS: Dioecious; on pedicels 1/2-3/4 inch long, usually 3-4 grouped together in loose umbels near the end of the principal branches of long-branched few-flowered panicles that are 5-6 inches long, 2 1/2-3 inches broad.

FRUIT: Produced very sparingly, about 1/8 inch long, on stems 2-3 inches long; the sterile pedicels 1 1/2-2 inches long at maturity, covered with short inconspicuous pale purple or brown hairs; seed kidney-shaped, pale brown, about 1/16 inch long.

WINTER BUDS: 1/8 inch long, covered with thin dark red-brown scales.

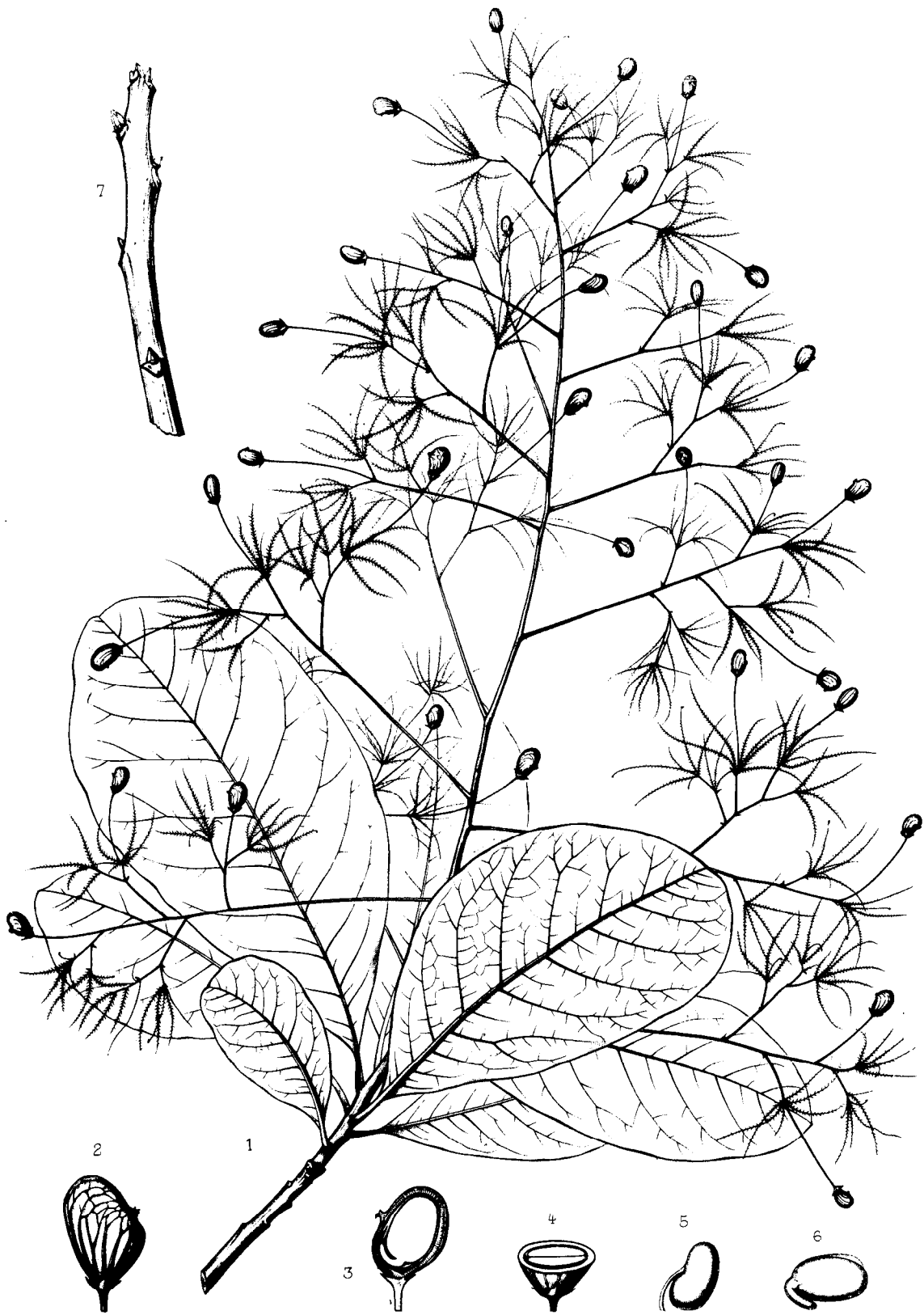WOOD: Light, soft rather coarse-grained, bright clear rich orange color, thin white sapwood.

USES: Fence posts, clear orange-colored dye.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS: Flowers borne on the ends of the principal branches of slender long-branched few-flowered panicles 5-6 inches long; staminate and pistillate flowers on different individuals; wood orange color.

DISTRIBUTION IN ALABAMA: Reported from Madison and Morgan Counties, but may be more widely distributed naturally, and as an escape from cultivation.

EXPLANATIONS OF PLATE

1. A fruiting branch
2. A fruit
3. Vertical section of a fruit
4. Cross section of a fruit
5. A seed
6. An embryo
7. A winter branchlet

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Plate **79**